

Stealth unmanned combat vehicle makes first flight

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The Boeing Phantom Ray unmanned airborne system (UAS) on its first flight.
Credit: Boeing.

Looking like something straight from a 1950's science fiction magazine, the stealthy Phantom Ray unmanned airborne system (UAS) successfully completed its first flight on April 27, 2011 at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center at Edwards Air Force Base in California. The 17-minute flight took place following a series of high-speed taxi tests in March that validated ground guidance, navigation and control and

verified mission planning, pilot interface and operational procedures. The Phantom Ray is a demonstrator aircraft, about the size of a fighter jet, developed to test operations such as air surveillance, ground attack and autonomous aerial refueling missions. During the test flight, the Phantom Ray flew to 2,290 meters (7,500 feet) and reached a speed of 178 knots.

“This day has been two-and-a-half years in the making,” said Darryl Davis, president, Boeing Phantom Works. “It’s the beginning of providing our customers with a test bed to develop future unmanned systems technology, and a testament to the capabilities resident within Boeing. Just as follow-on tests will expand Phantom Ray’s flight envelope, they also will help Boeing expand its presence in the unmanned systems market.”

The flight demonstrated Phantom Ray’s basic airworthiness, and Boeing engineers are planning additional flights in the next few weeks. Other potential uses for the vehicle include intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and suppression of enemy air defenses.

“The first [flight](#) moves us farther into the next phase of unmanned aircraft,” said Craig Brown, Phantom Ray program manager for Boeing. “Autonomous, fighter-sized unmanned aircraft are real, and the UAS bar has been raised. Now I’m eager to see how high that bar will go.”

Source: [Universe Today](#)

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